

This document is simply a cut-and-paste from the old Usenet group rec.music.ragtime@googlegroups.com from August 14, 2007
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-----Anonymous

“What is Ragtime? David A. Jasen gives the definitive musical definition as well as the history of Ragtime from it's beginning to the present day in his latest book "Ragtime An Encyclopedia, Discography, and Sheetography" published by Routledge. It's 550 pages, hardcover, 8 ½" X 11".

Jasen describes in detail the categories of Ragtime. From the Early Folk Rags, The Joplin Tradition or Classic Ragtime, Popular Ragtime, Advanced Ragtime, Novelty Ragtime, Stride Ragtime, and Jelly Roll Morton's Ragtime. Ragtime's original heyday as well as its Revivals are covered up to the present day.

The book is divided into 4 primary sections. The first section contains the Encyclopedia entries. You can look up Composer, Performer, and Publisher Profiles, Ragtime Compositions with musical descriptions and other interesting related facts. There are over 100 images of rare photos and artifacts from the Ragtime era. Including a signed contract between Scott Joplin and his publisher John Stark for his landmark composition "The Maple Leaf Rag". There are images of Sheet Music, Record and Piano Roll Labels, Period Advertising, Composers, Performers, and Places of historical interest.

As a serious collector of Ragtime Sheet Music, Piano Rolls and Records, I really appreciate the next three sections of the book. The perennial question for the collector is "What's out there to collect?" For the performer it might be "What tune can I perform that nobody else has done or may even know about?" Stamp collectors have their Scott's Catalog to see what's possible to collect. We Ragtimers have a Discography, Ragtime Piano Rollography, and Sheetography, thanks to Professor Jasen, the first to have published them. I check off the items I own, and then I can see the items I need.

Appendix 1 Rags On Record: A Discography

"The intention of this discography is to identify all commercially released discs of 78s, 45s, and LPs throughout the world since the beginning of Ragtime recording in 1897." The discography lists the Compositions alphabetically with the Composer, followed by Performers, Record Speeds, Record Companies and Number, and Year of release.

Appendix 2 Ragtime Piano Rollography

There are Ragtime Compositions that were never published in sheet music form, or recorded on disc, as you will note from the entries in the encyclopedia. However, some compositions do turn up on Piano Roll. Some of the performances are truly extraordinary. The Rollography lists the Compositions with Composers alphabetically, then the Roll Companies and Number. If the roll is an early 65-note type it's indicated. The performer is listed if the roll is hand played.

Appendix 3 Published Rags In America

There's an alphabetical list of over 2000 Published Instrumental Ragtime compositions. It lists the Composition followed by the Composer, Date, Publisher, City and State of Publication.

David A Jasen is internationally recognized as a leading authority on American Popular Music. He's authored many well-received reference books on Ragtime, Early Jazz and Popular Music. He produced many sheet music folios and Records. As a Composer and Performer, The Professor captures the essence of Ragtime. He is Professor of Media Arts at the C.W. Post campus of Long Island University, where he has been teaching for the past 35 years.

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Aug 9, 2007, 11:34:59 AM

to

First a quick note regarding Charles L. Johnson's Fannie B. Woods pseudonym, which came up in the earlier "Ragtime Encyclopedia, Discography, Sheetography . . ." thread. I'd trust the accuracy of Fannie B. Wood's son more than I'd trust Charles L. Johnson's publisher. The sheet music's dedication to her soon-to-be husband, the father for whom the son was named, is convincing evidence. Where Jasen's information came from is immaterial. Discoveries a couple of years ago indicate his source is wrong.

I wrote Jasen a letter in June 1898, shortly after I had begun researching the life and career of William Christopher O'Hare, my ragtime composer great grandfather. In response, Jasen phoned me. During the conversation, he told me that my great grandfather was from Shreveport. He gave his source as Isidore Witmark and Isaac Goldberg's well-known history of the music publishing firm M. Witmark

& Sons--The Story of the House of Witmark (1939). This "fact" serves as another example of erroneous information disseminated by a publisher and taken as "truth" by unsuspecting, unquestioning readers or listeners. Perhaps Witmark considered Louisiana a more fitting home than Washington, D.C. for the composer of several folk rags in its catalog. Perhaps this was an honest mistake on Witmark's part because O'Hare had lived in Shreveport for 12 years after leaving DC and before moving to NY. Whatever the case, Jasen also told me that my great grandfather worked for Witmark's Chicago branch. I didn't know much at the time, but two things I did know and explain: W. C. O'Hare was from Washington, D.C. and had worked for Witmark in New York. After I explained what I knew, Jasen repeated that my great grandfather was from Shreveport and had been on Witmark's Chicago staff. Why he stuck to that story I can't say.

After several extended research trips to Shreveport and DC, I can now document many events in William Christopher O'Hare's life, including his graduation from business college, his membership in a drama club, and the band he led in DC before moving to Shreveport at 21. I have microfilm copies of Shreveport newspaper articles mentioning his arrival from DC and his father and sister's visit from DC. Several years later, the social columnist talks of his new job in NYC and thanks him for sending NY newspapers. I have information documenting his death in a NYC hospital and his burial in the O'Hare family plot. I have driven to the cemetery twice, talked with office employees, seen burial records, sat on his hilltop gravesite with a friend overlooking DC, and met roughly 60 members of my (and his) extended DC-area family.

I used the index and the search feature on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) to see if any of the misinformation given to me nine years ago over the phone appears in the new book. According to the index and search, the name O'Hare does not appear, so I assume that there are no discography or sheetography listings, in addition to no biographical information. Will Joel or anyone else with a copy of the book please confirm or disprove my assumption based on the online search results? This could easily be done by checking the sheetography and discography for "Levee Revels," "Plantation Pastimes," and "Cottonfield Capers." Granted, William Christopher O'Hare was not a MAJOR ragtime composer, but "Levee Revels" was recorded repeatedly during the ragtime era, including by Sousa's band, directed by Arthur Pryor on the Berliner Gramophone and Victor labels. It was also recorded by orchestra on the Talk-o-phone label. "Plantation Pastimes" was issued by Climax, Victor, and Columbia; "Cottonfield Capers" by Star, D&R, Kalamazoo, Climax, and Columbia. Those are the recordings I know of; there may have been more. I listed several in the 2002 Ragtime Ephemeralist but

have learned of others since then. "Levee Revels" and "Cottonfield Capers" have been recorded in recent years, with recordings of "Cottonfield Capers" released in 2006 and 2007. Those two are too recent to have been included in Jasen's book. However, if I have been able to find these earlier recordings and if the music is still respected and enjoyed enough to be played by Morten Gunnar Larsen and others who regularly play rags, surely a major ragtime scholar should have found them and listed them in a definitive study. I'd be happy to have my assumption disproved and to learn that he did, for it seems an odd omission to make in a definitive study for someone who knew the composer at least as far back as 1998.

But although this leads up to my point, none of it is quite my point. Despite the large amount and variety of information that Jasen has assembled in his new book, we will never see a truly definitive ragtime encyclopedia, discography, sheetography, and rollography. Trying to cover everything there is to know about any large, comprehensive subject forces one to skim the surface and perhaps even to describe the music, as Jasen frequently does, with largely meaningless adjectives such as "unique," "imaginative," "inspired," "athletic," and "lyrical," while only sometimes supplying a phrase or clause that supports and justifies the chosen adjective. Certainly, nothing is wrong with, and much is praiseworthy about, compiling data from sources such as copyright entries, advertisements, publishers' records, etc. Somebody needs to do it. As Joel points out, such material has many uses. Accolade upon accolade will be heaped upon Jasen from many directions for what he has accomplished. Nonetheless, more discoveries will always lie ahead for those whose focus allows them to, and whose mindset compels them to, dig more deeply and to question both newly gathered information and old beliefs. We will always have more past misconceptions and errors to correct and more new questions to raise and to answer.

Sue

P.S. Just so there's no confusion, a signed Maple Leaf Rag contract has been previously reproduced. You can find it on page 55 of the Oxford paperback edition of Ed Berlin's Joplin biography published about 13 years ago. Furthermore, Ed's endnotes acknowledge that it had been previously printed in the Rag Times. Since I had exhausted my free searches and "surprise me" pages on the book's Amazon page before trying to locate the contract, please let me know if it differs from that first published in 1975.





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Aug 13, 2007, 11:26:42 AM

to

Hi Sue and all.

Please note that this post is presented with the utmost respect of all researchers addressed, but is meant to supplement with newer and correct information, not to deride their amazing collective work in any manner.

To Sue, thanks so much for the acknowledgement of my research (with your help) on Woods.

The information from Forster was simply wrong, but I do have a theory on that. It should be noted that a receipt exists of payment to her by Forster for Sweetness, as do a couple of newspaper articles from Louisville around 1912 about her performing the piece at her department store job. It should also be considered how Kansas City resident Charles L. Johnson would have known Dr. William J. Mansfield, the dedicatee, who lived in Louisville at that time and happened to marry Woods a year after publication.

Here is the theory - Johnson may have arranged the piece for Forster. He did contract as an arranger from time to time anyhow. In the same way that Matthews applied his Pastime sensibilities to Cactus, Jinx and Agitation (Cataract and Lily are another story), Johnson could have made Sweetness sound like a Johnson rag. Woods, however, is clearly real and clearly the original source of the piece.

This and Al Marzian (Mark Janza) only started my research into mystery composers or pseudonyms based in part (not meant in any way to be derogatory, but simply a starting point) in the information in R&R and TAR, plus other sources. Sometimes it comes from questions by others. So in the case of Ethel Earnist, it was Terry P. who brought it up to me that Peanuts was not only NOT a Johnson piece, but perhaps Theron C. Bennett, at least one theory.

I took it from there and with a little corroborative help was able to find Ethel Earnist living in Omaha in 1910 as a music store demonstrator, then again in 1918 and later, after having married, in the Jackson area of KC, MO. She had also worked for Jenkins as a demonstrator in the KC area. Recent searches in city directories

turned up her father, listed in Omaha in 1911, in Independence in 1912, perhaps late 1911, and not too far from KC. So that places a musical/pianist Ethel Earnist within shouting distance of Charles L. Johnson around the time of the Peanuts publication.

Consider that Johnson published pieces by other women, and multiple pieces under Raymond Birch, but nobody has credited him with writing any of the pieces by these other women, even though two of them have been difficult to establish identities for. Why pick on Earnist and Woods? I don't know. Perhaps they seem like unlikely contrived or silly names, but the U.S. Census and local censii/directories say otherwise. Both Nora and Trebor have signed off on Ethel as well as Fannie, for which I am grateful.

Another omission, and I have not seen the new Jasen book yet so don't know if it has been corrected, was of Harry Augustus (H.A.) Fischler, shown as recently as TAR in 2000 to be a Lincoln pseudonym. Lycoming Valley and U.S. Census records indicate otherwise, as does a pretty accessible history of his work and that of his musical family with a little digging. I have his biography and many others listed here at <http://www.perfessorbill.com/ragtime4.shtml> .

Those others include what little is available plus some noted speculation on Lucian P. Gibson, and the even harder to track down Clarence H. St. John, which I was able to get a fairly good fix on with a lot of hard looking. But then again, I have admittedly filled in some of the DNA with speculation that simply explains why he has been so hard to find, what may have happened to him for some decades that made him hard to track, etc. In addition, new collective information, even if miniscule at times, on David Guion, J.S. Zamecnik, George L. Cobb, Jay Roberts and Al Marzian, my first fortuitous discovery along with Dick Zimmerman, all on the link noted above.

Has the Eubie Blake gaffe been fixed? I was most surprised when following up the work of Mike Meddings and others to see the coroner's certificate, a public record, which CLEARLY stated Eubie's birth date of 1887 at his time of death, in addition to significant Federal and Baltimore/NYC legal records available when the research was being done on Blake. Some are still convinced that Eubie would not lie to them (the difference started around WWII when his stated age of +4 years on his draft eligibility made him clearly ineligible for any position in the military) even though he allegedly admitted the deception to a friend who knew better. If this has not been corrected by now, I would be disappointed.

Sorry to sound off, but Sue is right, the collective information will be hard to establish in one place. However, the starting place is to be sure of what we have to begin with, and perhaps in the case of such huge undertakings as R&R and Tin Pan Alley were, contract out searches - distribute the work load - for those missing or unknown gaps so they may be correctly addressed, or at least re-dressed a little bit.

Please note that I have the utmost admiration for all of Dave's work in spite of the occasional gap, which may be simply incorrect information being fed to him, and continue to count on him for fresh looks at an old topic. Except for the omissions/corrections noted here, I was still enthralled by TAR, and when the budget allows (I just bought a 9'3" concert grand so there is NO budget right now) I will get the encyclopedia in support of him.

I also want to clearly thank Sue, Nan Bostick, Nora Hulse Ted Tjaden and Reginald Pitts, who have been very helpful in either supplying or confirming information obtained on these mystery composers (St. John is still in process), and Trebor for his continuing encouragement and support during a difficult time for him.

And of course to Ed Berlin who has tacitly given me a kick in the pants to do research well and do it correctly. Also, how to present the discernment between what DID happen and the speculation on what MAY have happened. Thanks.

SYNCere thanks to all, Bill Edwards



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Aug 14, 2007, 7:52:37 PM

to

Thanks for filling in some gaps. I agree that collaborative effort, when possible, is the way to go on many topics. What one person doesn't find, another might. As a group, we have a variety of ideas and resources. That lesson about distinguishing between fact and speculation is critical for each of us. Try as we might to discover a complete picture, we're likely to fall short. Then it's time to speculate about what may have happened. Other times, we may unearth conflicting stories which we're unable to prove or disprove. Rather than pick our favorite story and proclaim it Truth, we need to acknowledge each.

Also, sources need to be clearly documented although all too often they aren't. Recently, I've read a couple of seemingly well-researched books from good university presses (nothing to do with ragtime). However, because of the condensed handling of sources, I finished suspicious of what I'd read. It wasn't possible to tell what source coincided with what information. This may have been the authors' fault, but it may also have been the publishers' doing in an effort to save space. I've heard people several people ask, "Who reads the notes, anyway?" But some of us do, and readers have a right to know the sources.

Rodney Sauer of Mont Alto Ragtime and Tango Orchestra/Mont Alto Motion Picture Orchestra is also interested in Zamecnik. If you're not in touch, you can find a contact link on Mont Alto's website.

Sue”